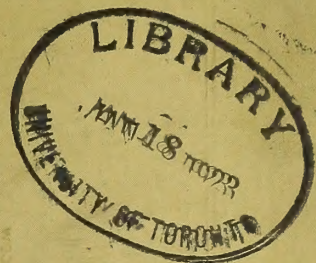


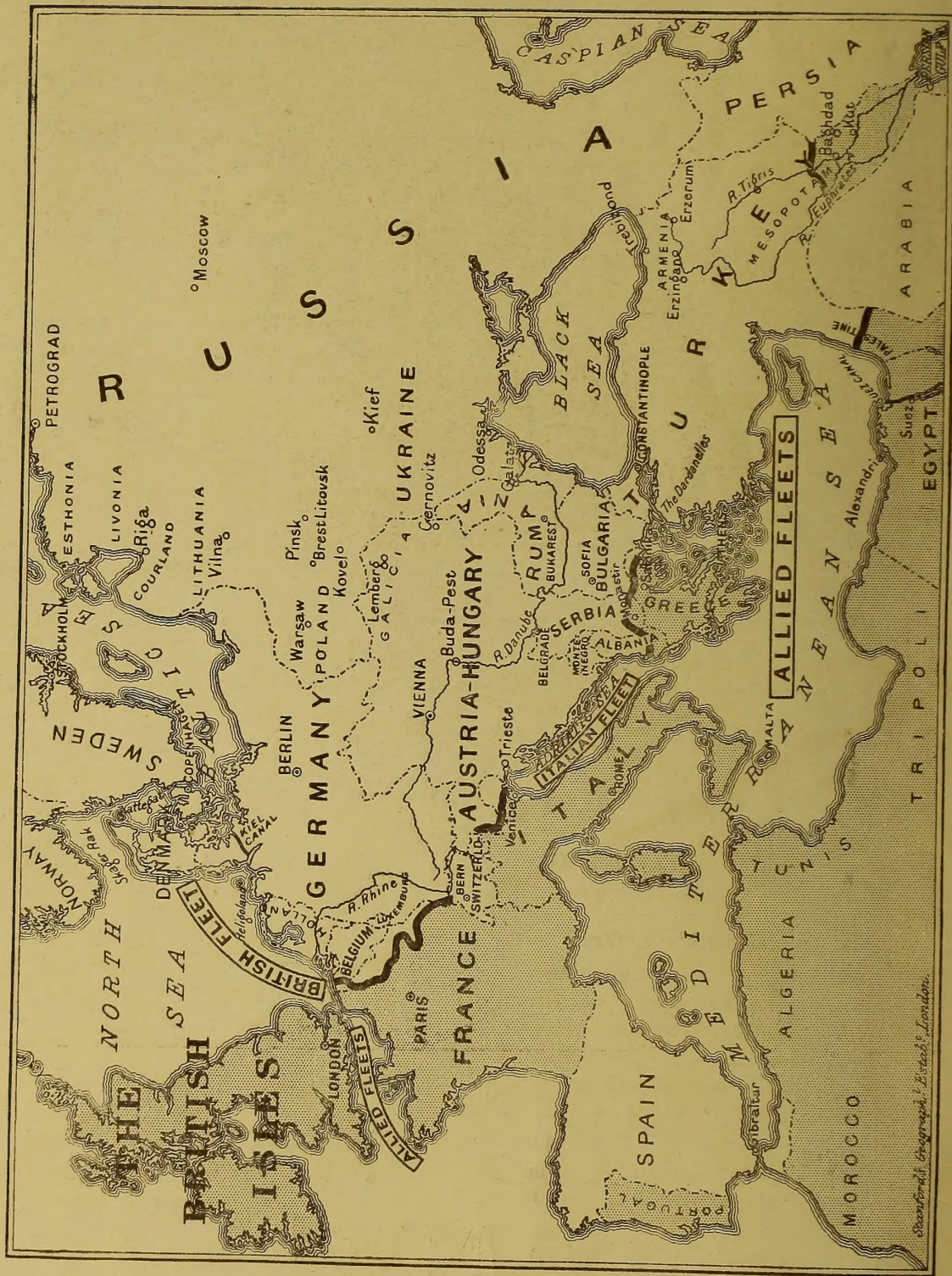
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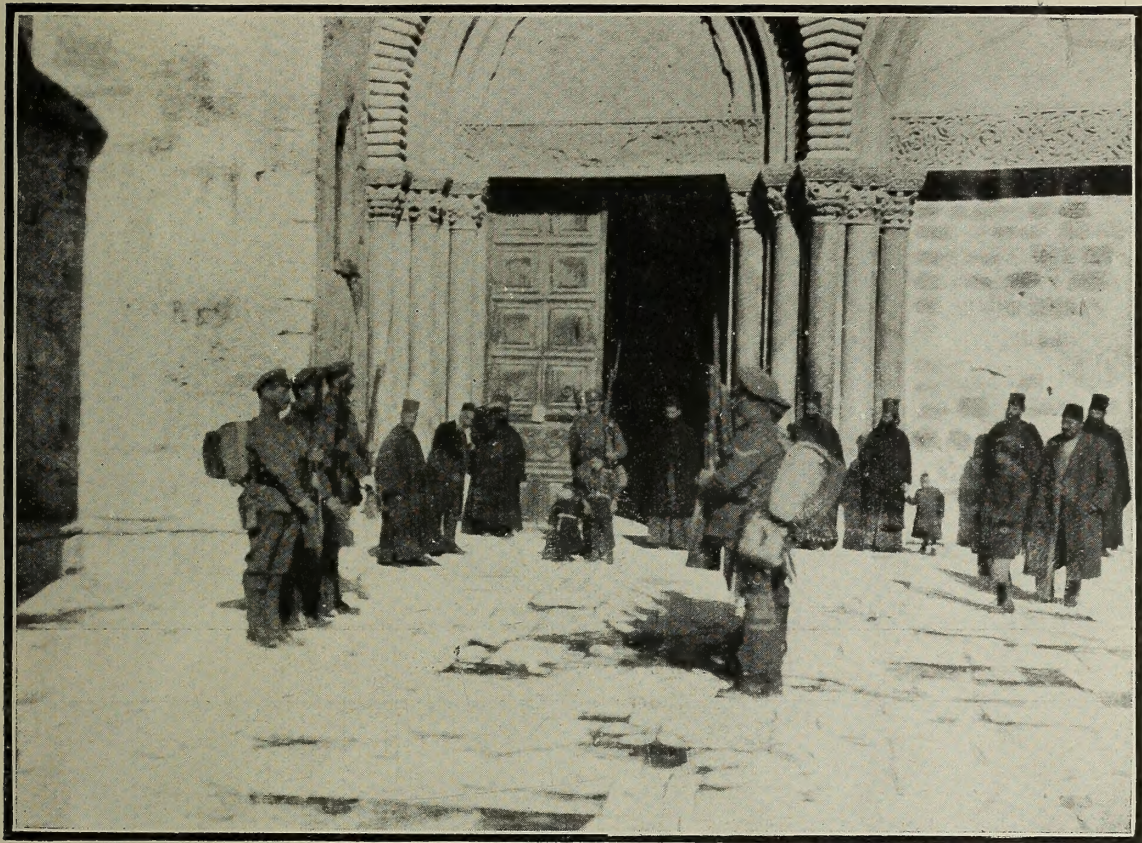


THE WAR

in March

MCMXVIII.





Changing the Guard outside the Holy Sepulchre.

THE WAR IN MARCH 1918

The Offensive in the West.

THE German promise of a great offensive in the West was slow to materialise.

Weeks passed, fine weather held good, the enemy divisions still came from the East in a steady trickle until it was estimated that he had 190 in line and in reserve in France and Flanders; but it was not until the morning of March 21st that the great attack was launched against the British armies on a fifty mile front, between the Scarpe and the Oise.

At the time of writing the exact purpose of the German offensive has not been disclosed,

and prophesy is impossible. Its scope, however, is manifest from the fact that forty Germans divisions were indetified in the first day's action.

Preliminary Activities.

Over wide areas of the British and French fronts the enemy had already shown a great energy in raiding, but only on one occasion did this raiding burst out into action of larger proportions. This was on March 2nd, when, after seeing 120 miles of front ablaze with a violent artillery fire, he launched a series of attacks against the French positions in the Laon bend



A field gun in action on the Desert.



118mm. guns in action on the Desert.

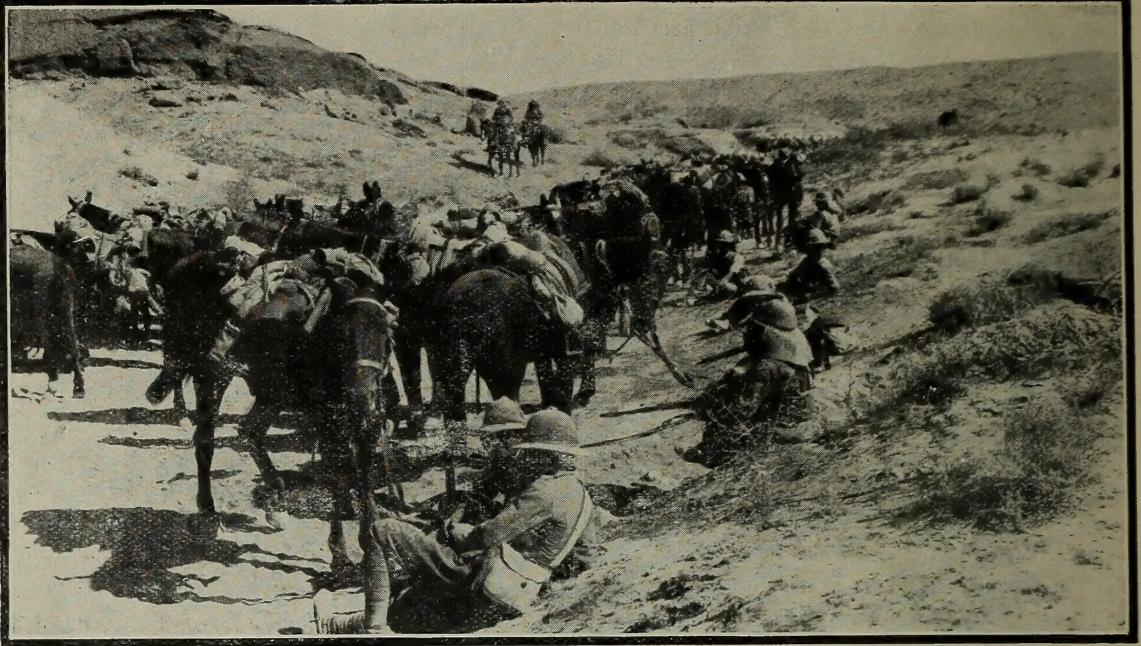
and eastward of Tahure. The attacks had mass and strength, and though the greater part of them were no more than heavy raids, at two points the enemy seemed to have the definite intention of taking local positions and scoring a success to his advantage. These points were at the old and ruined Fort of La Pompelle, east of Reims, and south-west of the Butte du Mesnil, where the French had taken from him a salient that enhanced their position here. At La Pompelle the enemy hoped to gain a point that would be useful to him both in attack and in the restriction of a French attack. The two battalions sent forward to the assault had orders to capture and hold the position, and subsidiary attacks were launched both to the east and west to distract attention. The movement failed. The Germans did not get into the fort: the most they could do was to obtain a lodgment in some advance lines on the flank, and even from these they were flung back by the French

counter-thrust, their failure in this engagement being emphasised by the heaviness of their losses. Something of the same thing happened at Butte du Mesnil; the weight of bombardment and attack carried the assaulting troops into the trenches, but they were ejected by the counter-attacks, driven home with great dash.

During these engagements the American troops came into action, and their activity developed from defence to actual raiding on their own sectors, in which excellent spirit was shown and valuable results were attained. In the course of the attack in the Laon area the Germans also turned their attention to the British and subjected their front to some powerful, if local, thrusts. Then, and after, they seemed to single out the Portuguese sectors for their attentions, but they have obtained nothing to satisfy them from these troops; the raids were admirably met, and heavy losses inflicted, while the Portuguese themselves retorted with fine



Returning from watering horses on the Western Front.



Supports awaiting to reinforce cavalry.

élan and carried destruction into the enemy lines. British, Australian, and Canadian troops did good work in raiding, or in resisting raids, and scored notably in the Houthulst region, about Passchendaele, at Messines, and at Lens. The object of the German aggressiveness was, no doubt, to practise the troops, who have either become lethargic from defensive warfare in the West, or from inactivity in the East, in the methods of assault, and to instil the combative spirit among them.

Towards the second week in March the raiding dwindled in violence, and the artillery and aerial work became more intense. This period, indeed, marked one of the most remarkable phases of aerial warfare this war has seen, for in combat, bombing, and long-distance raiding aerial warfare reached a stage beyond anything yet experienced.

Aerial Activity.

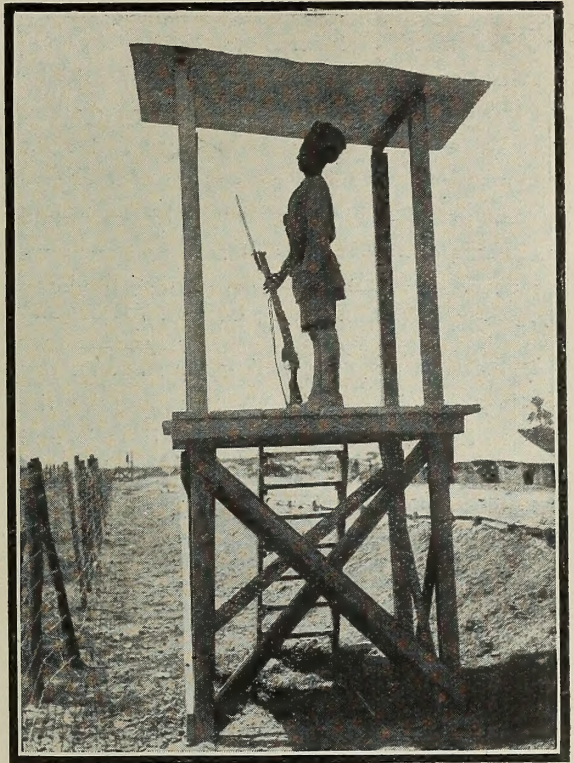
The first week of March was a bad one for flying, but once the conditions had improved it became evident that aerial fighting had reached a pitch beyond the usual, and that while both

sides were striving for supremacy there could be, from the returns of machines destroyed, little doubt that the British were establishing a very marked superiority. Scarcely a day passed without the British accounting for some 20 or more German machines, either destroyed or driven down, and the scale of success increased rather than decreased, so that in three days, the 14th, 15th and 16th, the Germans lost no fewer than 68 machines in battles with British military and naval airmen, 48 of these being definitely destroyed. By the 18th, so fierce had been the fighting, the Germans had lost over 250 machines to the British, over 150 of which were definitely out of the fighting.

The intensity of this fighting, as well as the marked increase in artillery action in the Armentieres and Cambrai sectors, was such as usually heralds an offensive, and the activity was doubtless the result of the German effort to drive the British out of the air and so blind them at a moment when it was vital to see the accumulations of men and guns, railways and lines of transport that would indicate the

strength of, and the point from which the offensive was about to be launched. On their side, also, the Germans were anxious to locate battery positions and to find out what dispositions the Allies had made to meet a threatened attack. since it was necessary for them to be as well informed as they meant their opponent to be ill-informed. The British aerial service has not yet reached the stage in which it has obtained the benefit of its full expansion; steadily as its strength has increased, that increase in a short time should become even more marked. The German air service is also steadily improving, but not so usefully as the British. Even apart from this, the Allies have yet to feel the full value of the American aerial reinforcements.

The allied superiority in the air is shown in part by the many and frequent attacks on military targets behind the enemy lines, and by the extending radius of flights into Germany. The bombing raids behind the German lines are carried out day and night, whereas the Germans almost invariably attack by night, and the number of bombs dropped in January



An Indian sentry guarding the Turkish prisoners' camp.



British soldiers try their hand at paddling a "Ballam"

was, roughly, five to one German. In March this form of attack became heavier, and explosives were dropped by the ton on enemy billets, aerodromes, dumps, railways and transport; on the 14th and 15th, 46 tons; and on the 17th 26½ tons of bombs were so dropped by the British and French, and the effects on the masses of men and accumulations of stores then concentrated behind the German lines can easily be imagined.

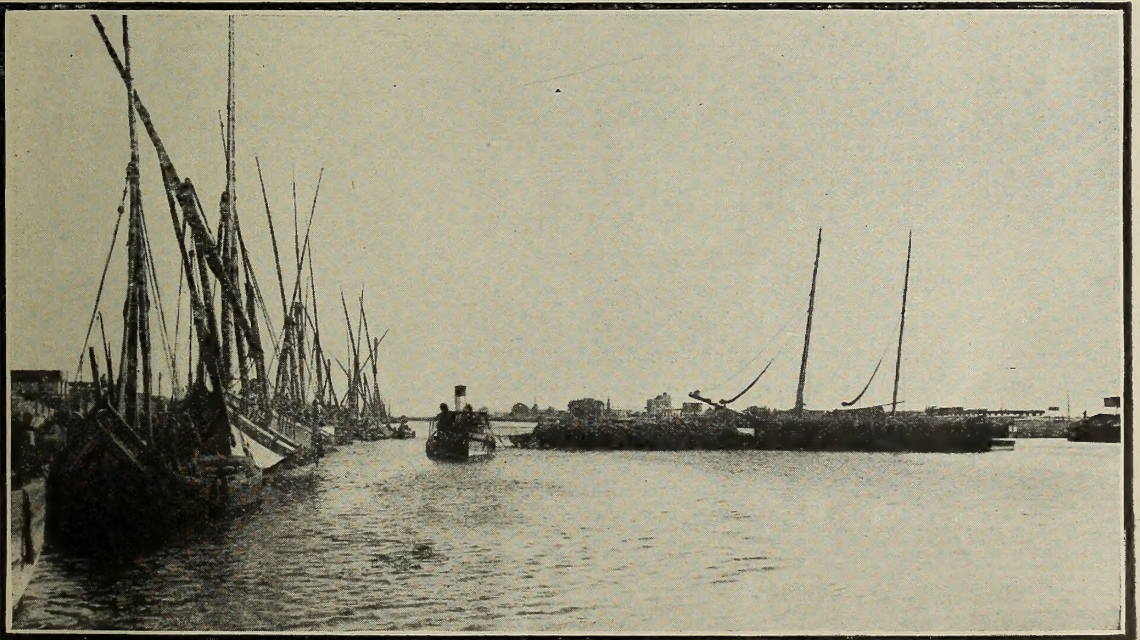
In the long-distance raiding the same energy has been displayed. Loath to undertake the policy of reprisals for attacks on French and British open towns far beyond the battle zone, the Allies now show that this weapon which the Germans have forced into their hands is capable of inflicting terrible punishment. The attacks on the Rhine towns have been consistent, and the depth of such raids has increased. Thirty-eight effective raids have been made since the

British adopted the present policy in October. Between March 9th and 18th the British made seven such raids, and the towns of Mayence, Stuttgart, Coblenz, Freiburg, Zweibrucken, Kaiserslautern, and Mannheim were attacked with definite and also useful results. For it is seen at once that these raids differ in certain respects from those made by the Central Powers over London, Paris, Venice, Padua, and Naples; nearly all of them were made in broad daylight, and each had a precise military object in the factories, barracks, and railways which gave the towns military importance. Daylight and the British practice of flying low down in such attacks enabled the airmen to locate and bomb these points with a certainty not possible in a hurried attack made from a great height and in the darkness; indeed the low figures of casualties among civilians caused by raids reported by the Germans bear out the fact that military targets and not the indiscriminate





Indian sentry guarding a hangar.



Tug bringing Dahabiehs laden with fresh bread baked in an army bakery.



End of British escort conducting Turkish Prisoners through Baghdad.

bombing of residential districts is the aim of the Allies.

That these raids have had a powerful effect can be deduced from the German Press from semi-official hints that the Germans are not disinclined to put an end to such raids by understanding, and from the new German cry that their own raids are undertaken merely as reprisals, and that the Allies actually began this form of attack by bombarding Dusseldorf and Friedrichshafen in the early days of the war. Such an attitude fails to convince; not merely were the attacks on Dusseldorf and Friedrichshafen of definitely military character, for the Zeppelin hangars and works were the objects of the bombing, but Germany has waited three years before she has thought of using these episodes as her excuse. During those three years she has bombed open and defenceless towns by Zeppelin and Gotha to her heart's content without the slightest mention of reprisal or talk of excuse; it is only when her own weapon is turned against her and she is being beaten at her own methods that she searches for

an excuse and protests against a form of warfare which was meritorious enough so long as she felt she could carry it on with immunity for herself.

The Unchecked Advance in Palestine.

HAVING cleared his left flank by advancing through Jericho to the Jordan, General Allenby resumed his forward movement north of Jerusalem on March 2nd. In a series of battles over extraordinarily difficult country and against positions which gave the enemy—whether he utilised them or not—every opportunity for resolute defence, the British line was forced rapidly northward on practically the whole front between the Jordan and the sea, until, on March 11th, it had reached a point on the Shechem road some 17 or 18 miles north of Jerusalem, and about 12 south of Shechem itself.

After the capture of Jericho the British moved in force towards the Jordan, and the Turkish posts on this flank were quickly swept away. By February 28th this force had definite



An aeroplane returning after a flight.

control of the river from the Dead Sea to the Mandesi Ford ten miles above the river mouth. The flotilla base at Rujm el Bahr, from which motor and sailing boats supplied the enemy on both shores of the Dead Sea, was taken and the valley secured, for, though the Turks still clung to the bridgehead at El Ghoraniyeh, the occupation of the Mandesi Ford, two miles to the north, threatened this outpost, and the Turks, realising this, blew up the bridge soon after and retired. Although the British Infantry did not descend from the hills into the hot valley, the cavalry patrols continued to work forward up the road, occupied the loop made by the junction of the Wadi Auja and the Jordan, and pressed the Turks back as far as Osh el Ghorab.

The movement of the British on March 2nd was on both sides of the Jerusalem-Shechem road, though the greatest advance was to the west of it, where, by a swinging movement, reaching at points a depth of 3,000 yards, the front was brought into line with the disposi-

tions on the Shechem road. At some points the Turks showed fight, but the resistance, on the whole, was not such as the terrain would lead one to expect.

Very little grace was given to the enemy, and on the 5th the British were moving forward again in a series of short progressive thrusts along the whole front from the railway near the coast to the Jordan Valley. Between that date and March 7th advances to the extent of three miles were made. Again the Turkish resistance, violent at points, was weak on the whole, the reason for this no doubt being that the pressure of the attack was placing the enemy in an unpleasant predicament. Behind his line the two Auja Rivers, one entering the sea to the west, the other falling into the Jordan, formed a deep valley practically from flank to flank, and into this valley General Allenby was pushing the Turks, who, to escape being caught in the open, were withdrawing rapidly to the northern lights. The British task was by no means an easy one. All movements had to be



Ctesiphon Arch.



All water used here has to be brought from the river and then carried to the camps in carts. British soldiers pumping water into one of the carts.

over the crest and down hill for a considerable distance. On the road itself the British forced their way through the ravines and cliffs about the Wadi el Jib, a branch of the Western Auja, until they had won their way to the further side. Welsh troops fought admirably here, not only beating the enemy, but man-handling and frequently lowering guns by ropes along the rocky tracks and down the cliffs. West of the road the advance presented the same difficulties, but it was maintained on the whole front, and at the close of the movement the line had reached Deir-ez-Sudan (six miles north-west of the road); the Irish troops did magnificently in this area. In the Jordan Valley the advance was also continued, and pressure was maintained northward along the road, the Turks being out-fought and dislodged from the high ground on the line Abu Tellul-Beiyudat. The enemy's positions here were excellent, and he clung to them with some tenacity, but in spite of this, and in spite of his counter-attacks, the honours remained with the British, who advanced their line in this direction about five miles.

After the capture of the range of central heights and the elimination of so serious an obstacle, General Allenby began to swing his line forward in the coastal sector. His first movement was on a short front between Fejja, about nine miles north of Lydd and a mile west of the railway, and Tel el Mukhmar, a point on the Auja three miles N. by W. of Fejja. This was quickly extended and the advance was taken up on a broad front of about 11 miles running eastward from the Auja and the railway. Again good progress was recorded and a depth of three miles was reached, the new front passing beyond El Mirr (close to the railway and 11 miles above Lydd) on to the high ground beyond the Wadi Deir Ballut. At both these points the enemy resisted stubbornly, but both here and on the rest of the line the advance was fully carried out. The significance of this new stroke was that the British had forced their way north of the Wadi Deir Ballut, a tributary of the Western Auja, a barrier of importance, and had straightened out their front

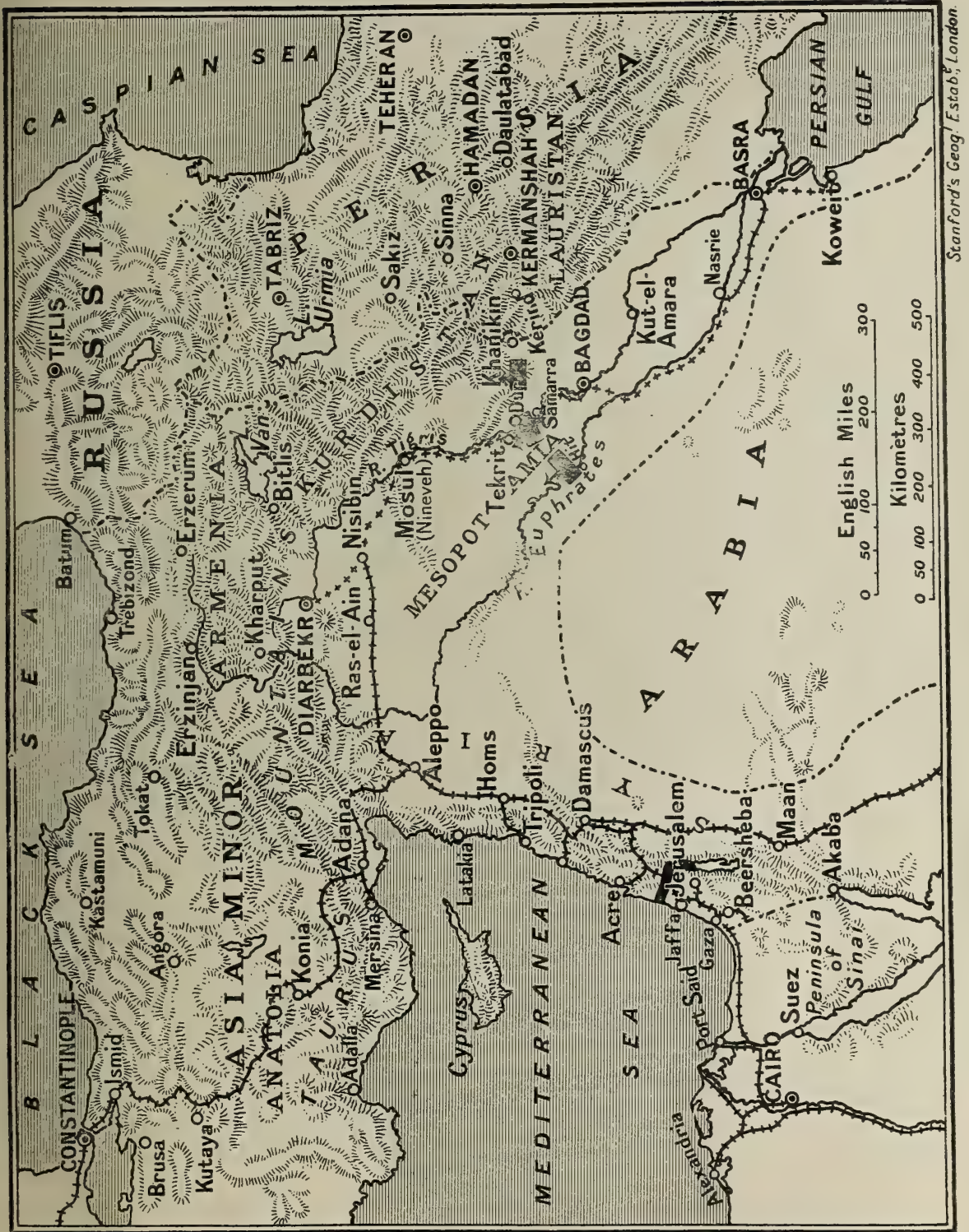
from the coast into alignment with that on the Shechem road. They had encountered great difficulties and had overcome them, and although the resistance of the Turks was not generally what had been expected the fighting was hard, and at some points extremely violent.

After this effort came a pause—though progress was made north of Abu Tellul in the Jordan sector—during which the positions taken in the past strenuous days were consolidated and the communications organised. In the course of the fighting the Turks lost 17 officers and 265 men prisoners, while 400 dead were counted. The booty included 13 machine guns and large quantities of ammunition.

On the Left Bank in Mesopotamia.

WHILE fighting was going on in Palestine there was, once more, an advance in Mesopotamia. This advance was not very great or protracted, since its aim seems to have been no more than to deprive the







Military map of the United States, showing the training camps. The signs in right-hand bottom corner of the map refer to (1) Forts, posts, and stations of the Army; (2) National Army cantonments; (3) National Guard camps; (4) Aero training stations; (5) Marine Barracks and naval training stations.



A store of bread ready for the troops.

Turks of a jumping-off point at Hit, in very much the same way as the British had broken up the bases and disorganised the enemy plans at Tekrit to the north of Bagdad, and in the Kara Tepe area to the east.

On February 25th British columns moving up the Euphrates came in contact with the Turks, pressed them back and occupied positions in the bend of the river at Khan Abu Rayan, about 15 miles above Ramadie, and 18 from Hit. The enemy falling back occupied hill positions covering Hit, which was a point of some importance, for it stands on the caravan

routes to Damascus and Aleppo, and also possesses potentialities as an oilfield. Wet weather prevented further action, though in periods of good conditions British aviators bombed the enemy camps and avenues of supply. After a short pause, however, the British advance began once more, and on March 9th Hit was occupied. The enemy retired from his positions without showing fight, and fell back in some haste through Salahie to Khan Baghdadi, 22 miles up stream, his movements being accelerated by vigorous bomb and machine-gun attacks from aeroplanes.

The British columns followed the enemy as far as Salabie, seven miles above Hit, where they have established themselves. The move, in addition to strengthening the Bagdad positions, must have further embarrassed the enemy already fully occupied in facing British attacks in Palestine and Arab raids in Hedjaz,

while the British have also made an advance which facilitates any movement which may be desired on the Aleppo road, a fact that, in conjunction with the doings of the Palestine force and Arab forces, must be disturbing to the enemy.



Tending the Graves of our Fallen Warriors.

DIARY.

February.

- Feb. 22.—Scotch troops raid near Monchy-le-Preux.
,, 23.—French raid at Chevigny, with American help.
,, 26.—British column from Port Amelia occupy Meza (E. Africa).
,, 27.—British raids north of River Scarpe and in Houthulst Forest; 14 prisoners.
,, 28.—Enemy attacks on Chavignon and Corbeny repulsed by French.

March.

- Mar. 1.—French repel attack on Butte du Mesnil.
,, 2.—French repel attack on Moronvilliers ridge.
,, 3.—Peace signed between Germany and Russia.
,, 4.—At the Calonne Trench (Woevre) French penetrate enemy lines on front of 1,200 yards; over 150 prisoners.
,, 5.—Belgians repel attacks east of Ramschapelle and south of Stuyvenskerke; over 100 prisoners.
,, 6.—Turks blow up bridge at El Ghoraniyeh (Jordan).
,, 9.—British occupy Hit. British cross the Wadi Auja, take Kh. el Beiyudat—Abu Tellul position after strong resistance, and occupy Kefr Malix, Tel Asur, Selwad, Burj Bardawil, Attara, Ajul, Deir-ez-Sudan.
,, 10.—British secure ridges overlooking north bank of Wadi-el-Jib.
,, 11.—Enemy driven from Poluvu (East Africa).
,, 12.—British capture Rentis, El Lubban, Deir Ballut, Medjel Yaba and El Mirr (Palestine Coast).
,, 13.—British raid south-east of Polygon Wood (37 prisoners), 27 prisoners taken near Ypres-Commines Canal.
,, 14.—French regain trenches west of Mont Cornillet (Champagne); 42 prisoners.
,, 16.—French penetrate enemy trenches near Cheppy: 80 prisoners.
,, 18.—British bomb Mannheim.
,, 19.—Enemy raid north-east of Armentieres repulsed.
,, 20.—Strong enemy attack on French lines at Souain, south of Arracourt, and in the region of Bois Brûlé (Woevre).
,, 21.—Powerful infantry attack on allied front of over 50 miles, from the River Oise near La Fère to the Sensée River about Croisilles.

RECORD

RECORD

17—British and French troops, with American
troops, have been sent to the country
(L. 1711).
18—British and French troops, with
American troops, have been sent to the
country (L. 1711).
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RECORD

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LONDON:

MERRITT & HATCHER, Ltd.

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